Castlemaine Naturalist

September 2017

Vol. 42.8 #457

Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Common Hovea – photo NY, Kalimna park

August Excursion to Kalimna Park

Richard Piesse

The orchid outing to Kalimna park proved more successful than anticipated. The promised Emerald-lip Greenhood colony was located with approximately 30 plants in flower, and the large areas of Nodding Greenhoods were found just west of the tourist road.

Generally the forest was relatively damp, and most of the trees, bushes and grasses were looking healthy. A quick walk around the Kalimna circuit track revealed lots of wattles coming into flower, many more orchids, and the possibility of good spring flowers in September/October.

Plants in flower included:

Pterostylis smaragdyna	Emerald-lip Greenhood
Pterostylis nutans	Nodding Greenhood
Pterostylis nana	Dwarf Greenhood
**Pterostylis* sp. affin *parviflora*	Red-tip Greenhood
**Corunastylis despectans*	Sharp Midge-orchid

*both these identifiable but well past best flowering

Daviesia ulicifolia	Gorse Bitter-pea
Drosera macrantha	Climbing Sundew
Drosera auriculata	Tall Sundew
Drosera aberrans	Scented Sundew
Grevillea alpina	Downy Grevillea
Grevillea rosemarinifolia	Rosemary Grevillea
Hakea decurrens	Bushy Needlewood
Hovea linearis	Common Hovea
Opercularia varia	Variable Stinkweed
Philotheca verrucosa	Fairy Wax-flower

Rhytidosporum procumbens	White Marianth
Tetratheca ciliata	Pink Bells
Acacia acinacea	Gold dust Wattle
Acacia aspera	Rough Wattle
Acacia baileyana	Cootamundra Wattle #
Acacia dealbata	Silver Wattle
Acacia decurrens	Early Black Wattle #
Acacia genistifolia	Spreading Wattle
Acacia gunnii	Ploughshare Wattle
Acacia pycnantha	Golden Wattle

introduced to the Castlemaine bush

Emerald-lip Greenhoods (left, right and above) Kalimna Park. 12-8-17

Note the 'lip' (labellum) is green. It is usually brownish in the Tall (*melagramma*) species

Dense patches of *nutans* (Nodding Greenhoods) were also found (left). Photos by Noel Young

Once I came upon some thallose Liverworts……

Geraldine Harris

Walking in the bush at Barkers creek after the rain last week I photographed a patch of green growth tucked in under a rocky outcrop. It turned out to be a colony of thallose Liverwort….possibly *Targionia hypophylla*. In the meantime I learned…….

In the plant kingdom, liverworts, mosses and hornworts are all classified as **Bryophytes**. They are all spore-producing, rather than seed-producing, plants that do not produce flowers. Mosses have leaves and solid stalked spore capsules; hornworts do not have leaves and produce their spores in horn-like structures; and liverworts produce their spores in small capsules.

A liverwort, therefore, **is a flowerless, spore-producing plant - with the spores produced in small capsules.** In broad terms, there are two forms of liverwort - **leafy liverworts** have leaves on stems and **thallose liverworts** that are flattish, green sheets that may be wrinkled or lobed. Such a sheet is called a **thallus** and, in many cases, that's all there is to see. However, in some thallose genera there's a bit more than this **gametophyte stage** and spore capsules are produced in a **sporophyte stage.**

In the genus **Targionia,** the thalli are green, strap-like and with black scales below. The spore capsules form in pouches at the ends of the thalli. My photos show the green thalli, with numerous air pores on the upper surface and if you look carefully you can see some black pouches extending beyond the end of the thalli on which they have developed. Inside each pouch is a spore capsule. The black pouch is not part of the capsule, but surrounds and protects the developing capsule. At maturity the capsule inside breaks open and the pouch opens so that spores can get out.

PS. The English word "wort" means "small plant" and it turns up also in names such as Pennywort and Bladderwort. The term liverwort originated from the fact that the early herbalists thought that one of the liverworts had some resemblance to a liver - and some use as medicine for liver ailments. Hence the word liverwort for a "liver-like small plant".

For much more information on Bryophytes see the references below.

Ref:

www.anbg.gov.au

Meagher, D & Fuhrer, B. (2003). ***A field guide to the mosses & allied plants of southeastern Australia***. ABRS, Canberra & FNCV, Melbourne.

Above: Thallose Liverwort – close-up at right shows air pores and black spore pouches.

Examples of other Bryophytes -

Right: a Hornwort

Below: Moss with spore stalks.

Introduction to International Flora of Bendigo

Geraldine Harris

In July, Geoff and I attended a very interesting workshop evening held by Ben Goonan of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club.

When we arrived Ben had 10 tressle tables covered with weeds he had collected along a short section of the Bendigo Creek and throughout the evening we systematically gathered around each table and went through all the samples, first guessing what they were and then looking at their identifying features and in some cases looking at look-a-like species.

Ben began by defining a weed as a plant requiring some form of action to reduce its harmful effect on the economy, human health or an amenity.

He told us that in Australia there are 26,000 introduced species, 25,000 in cultivation, 2,739 naturalised, 5,907 with weed histories in other countries, 600 naturalised natives, and 958 'garden thugs'. I may not have these figures absolutely correct but the numbers certainly illustrated the importance of being able to recognise weeds when endeavoring to protect our native species from such competition.

Ben also pointed out that some of our endangered species depend to some extent on weeds - Sun Moth (Chillean Needle Grass); Legless lizard (Phalaris); Bird species (can show a negative response to weed removal e.g., blackberry habitat).

All these plants were growing along Bendigo Creek and illustrated the huge competition between species fighting for survival. Many of the plants were very healthy extremely large specimens that were obviously thriving.

It was a very interesting workshop and by the end of the evening Ben had covered close to the one hundred plants he promised!

Our Guest Speaker for the September meeting

Unfortunately, Zoe Thompson is unable to attend for the coming meeting, but has arranged a substitute speaker for us:

Simon Heyes is currently studying for his Masters in Research at La Trobe on Banksia Recruitment .

He is looking at why banksias aren't regenerating and the ecology patterns of recruitment for Banksia marginata on the plains.

Simon previously worked for Greening Australia.

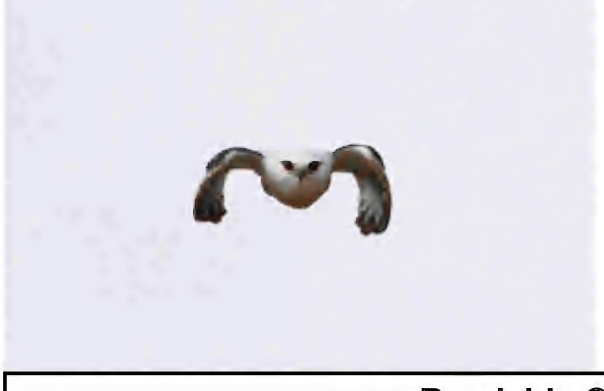
Photo Observations

Claire Morgan

Found these Fox cubs at the Long Swamp, they are going to have quite a problem out there given I counted six. Cute but the potential for death and mayhem !

Also at the Long Swamp:

Left: Barn Owl retreating, and (below), Black-shouldered Kite advancing.



Roadside Clean-up 19/8/17

There were just three of us at the roadside clean-up this month but we managed to get the entire stretch done in reasonable time. We ended up with about 10 bags of rubbish and a discarded television. Thanks to Geraldine and Noel.

Geoff Harris

Bird Quiz

Nigel Harland

The bird featured last month was the White-naped Honeyeater. It is a delightful bird which is fairly common in our district , although easily overlooked. It can be found on the eastern side of the Continent stretching into South Australia. A separate race exists in the south of Western Australia. There are several similar Honeyeaters, but the White-naped can be distinguished by the orange crescent above the eye. For some reason the nests of White-naped Honeyeaters are often parasitised by Fan-tailed and Pallid Cuckoos.

The bird for next month is shown.

Wednesday Wildflower Wanders

Program will commence on September 13th for four or five consecutive weeks, starting promptly at 4 p.m. from opposite the Castle Motel. An appointed leader will take us to an area in the surrounds of Castlemaine exhibiting a variety of flowering natives at the time. We will spend about an hour at the location. Bring field guides, magnifying glass, camera etc., and appropriate footwear.

Observations

At the August meeting:

- Geoff – pair of Eastern Shrike-tits seen at home this last week
- Dianne found an Echidna train of 5 on her property - destruction ensued
- Joy noted a pair of Spotted Pardalotes digging a nesting tunnel in the trunk of an old tree-fern
- Denis reported that Kangaroos chewed at the trunk of his Stringybarks and he noticed birds gathering the residue for nesting material
- Hans saw a large flock of 60 to 70 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flying above Etty st. recently
- Francis watched Wattlebirds noisily chasing a Yellow-footed Antechinus in her box tree

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists
Coming events

Fri September 8 meeting: speaker Simon Heyes (see details p. 5)

Wed September 13 – "Wildflower Wanders" commence (4 pm.)
- leader Richard
Wed September 20 (4 pm.) - leader Geraldine

Fri October 13 meeting: speaker Robyn Davidson

Fri November 10 meeting: speaker Ian Higgins – weeds, including Stipoids

Fri December 8 meeting: Members night and break-up

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website (Web master: Chris Timewell) - http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/

Subscriptions for 2017
Ordinary membership: Single $30, Family $40
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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